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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a qualitative case study of three interns who completed the 5-year teacher education program at the University of Tennessee and, following their intern year, were hired as teachers in the high school where they had served as interns. The program at the university prepared teachers in two phases: the undergraduate years, devoted mainly to a liberal arts education and a strong subject-matter preparation, followed by an internship year. The subjects of the study were intensively interviewed; two of the three were also observed during teaching. The subjects were, for the most part, satisfied with their preservice preparation and also felt that the internship year had strengthened their abilities and confidence. They all stressed that the practical experience had been far more valuable than their courses in general. Results of the study are analyzed briefly and implications for further research are suggested. A copy of the Teacher Interview Guide used in the study is appended. (JD)

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INTERNSHIP PAVED THE WAY FOR FIRST YEAR POSITIONS

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Introduction

The professional teacher preparation curriculum has remained essentially the same for more than fifty years. Foundation courses in educational psychology and the history and philosophy of education are followed by so-called methods courses, which in turn are followed by practice teaching (Tom, 1987). The Holmes Group, a consortium of colleges of education committed to improving teacher preparation and improving the teaching profession addresses this situation in their report, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1986), and outlines five avenues of improvement: strengthening academic and pedagogical training, creating three levels of certification, maintaining rigorous standards for certification, operating professional development schools, and upgrading teachers' working conditions and in-service training (Olson, 1987).

The Holmes plan was born to and is being nurtured by research universities that prepare teachers. It is there that those who conceived the reforms have the ability to get things done, to the extent that they have such a capability at all. (Cuban, 1987, Jacobson, 1986). As the Holmes universities begin their activities, they will affect the professional lives of teachers, school administrators, and university faculty members and affect the schooling and career plans of high school and college students for whom teaching is a career option.

This study of the first cohort of fifth-year postbaccalaureate interns was designed to gather information from

students, administrators, and educators about their perceptions, attitudes, and reactions to the internship that has arisen out of the Holmes Group report. A need for this study was supported by the identification of specific threats to teacher education reform (Roth, 1986). The two major threats to the implementation of reform in teacher education were identified as 1) Admitting into the profession individuals who have not had any formal teacher preparation and 2) a shortage of teachers (Roth, 1986). The postbaccalaureate fifth-year internship as identified by the University of Tennessee at Knoxville guards against both of these threats to teacher education by providing formal teacher education and certification in areas where teacher shortages have been identified as being the most acute.

Gathering and analyzing this information has several purposes. First, the results provide practical input for university and local school district committees, Holmes regional committees, and any other groups which are concerned with planning and implementing reform. Higher education program change works best when informed by the values, past experiences, and needs of those affected by the change (Levine, 1980). Teacher attitudes are important considerations for changes in school systems (Waugh & Punch, 1987). Second, the results contribute to a growing body of literature on teacher preparation and professional practice. This literature, largely survey research, has demonstrated teacher and administrator support for

the general ideals of redesigning teacher education, and the success of five-year programs (Coley & Thorpe, 1985).

After experiencing a decade of the educational reform movement with its many charges, challenges, and demands, and the various responses to these, some educators are pausing to assess the situation and attempt to determine the status of educational reform. This is occurring in Tennessee as it is elsewhere, and it is the intent of this paper to examine one of Tennessee's responses: the fifth-year postbaccalaureate internship.

The University Perspective

We wanted to prepare talented people with degrees in liberal arts for secondary school teaching through an intensive internship. Interns would spend ten weeks in the summer taking methods courses, learning the theory behind successful classroom teaching. Then they would spend a year in the classroom, teaching three classes a day and performing other teacher responsibilities, such as lunchroom supervision. A selected teacher at the intern's assigned school would be on hand to advise and help the intern. We hoped to show that a successful alternative certification program combines intensive coursework, classroom training, and guidance from experienced teachers and education faculty. We also hoped to demonstrate that a full year of teaching before certification was a good idea for all education students (Wisniewski, 1990).

The internship program at the University of Tennessee is a postbaccalaureate program in which the year-long public school internship is undertaken after the completion of a Liberal Arts Degree. Coursework in the College of Education is taken during the summer preceding the internship. During the fall semester of the internship year, students spend half of each day in their respective assigned schools, engaged in teaching-relating

activities that escalate to assuming responsibility for instruction for three classes by the middle of the semester. In addition, they are enrolled in from one to three university education courses during this fall semester. During the spring semester they have the full responsibility for teaching three classes and are involved in teaching-related activities during the remainder of the full day spent at the internship school. They are expected to take only one education course at the university during the spring semester.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study presented in this paper was to gather and analyze data on three interns from the fifth-year internship program at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Following their internship, these three interns were hired as first-year teachers at the same high school in which they completed their internships.

School Background Information

The high school in which these internships took place had a full time teaching staff of seventy-five teachers, with one thousand three hundred and forty students in attendance from a predominantly middle class professional background. The majority of students were from the upper SES level and were classified as college bound students. Eighteen of the students enrolled in this high school applied for and qualified for either free or

reduced lunch. The principal at this high school had ten years of administrative experience, with all his experience at this same high school.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for this study were three 1989 graduates of the first cohort of the fifth-year postbaccalaureate internship program at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. All three of these subjects interned at this same high school and all three of them were in turn hired to return as first-year teachers for the 1989-1990 school year. The former interns were caucasian; two of them were female; one was male. The average age of the interns was 29. Two of these three interns turned first-year teachers were single and one was married, none of the subjects had any children in the home. The subject that was married listed the strong support of her husband financially and emotionally as one of the reasons she was able to return to a postbaccalaureate program at this time in her career. One subject still resided at home and had the support of his family as he continued his education beyond the baccalaureate. He comes from a family of educators who condoned his ambition to become certified as a high school teacher. The third subject supported herself during the internship by working as a waitress after school hours and during the weekend. Two of the interns had majored in the sciences and one had majored in history.

Procedures

Prior to interviewing the participants and being appraised of their type of preparation program, the researcher asked the participants who had been identified to take part in the study for permission to observe them in a teaching situation for a two hour block with two different classes. The way classes were scheduled at this high school the observations were each fifty minutes in length, representing two different preparations and class periods of the day. Two of the three former interns agreed to be observed while they were engaged in the art of teaching. The researcher audio-taped the classes and also took detailed field notes during each observation. The field notes were expanded on a word processor soon after each observation was completed. The intern that declined observation was involved with assisting her students in end of the year laboratory experiments and made this decision in collaboration with the principal who felt that the maximum number of persons were already present in the laboratory during each class period and that an additional observer could reduce the safety of the students conducting and observing the experiments.

Two of the three participants were interviewed at their respective school sites, using a semi-structured interview guide. The third participant was interviewed following the end of the 1989-1990 school year by telephone so this interview was not recorded and was not transcribed as the other two interviews

were. This interview was reconstructed from hand written notes taken by the research interviewer.

A copy of the Teacher Interview Guide is included in Appendix A. The interns were permitted to diverge from the questions as outlined in the Interview Guide if they wished to do so. The researcher took detailed notes during all three of the interviews; she also audio-taped the two interviews conducted at the school site. The tapes and hand written notes were later transcribed and then analyzed for emerging attitude patterns by subject and then across the subjects to present a composite attitude pattern.

Results of the Study

All three of the interns are currently employed on a full-time basis as teachers in public high schools and they are very satisfied with their present employment situation. Two interns state that their current jobs are directly related to their preparation program at UTK. On a scale of one to ten, two interns were moderately satisfied with their teacher preparation program and one was very dissatisfied.

The three interns chose to attend UTK for their teacher preparation program primarily because of its location: distance from or proximity to their home and parents, and secondly because of its low cost, thirdly because of friends, relatives or teachers who have attended UTK in the past and/or finally because a guidance counselor recommended the program.

All three interns applied for teacher certification and actively sought teaching positions following their fifth-year internship at UTK. While all three were offered a teaching position in the school in which they interned, one of them was offered more than one teaching position. They all chose to accept positions at the high school they interned at.

In the conclusion of their first year as full time teachers all three interns stated that they planned to teach a second year but were undecided about how long their teaching careers would continue.

The three interns had different reactions to their first year of teaching. When asked what it is like to be a beginning teacher one intern stated, "It's nice, (a) good experience, I enjoy it. It's a lot of fun." When asked to describe a typical day, another intern described it as follows, "Well, it begins, I guess, right around 8:00 a.m. We're supposed to be here at 8 and I get here at 8. I usually come on into my classroom because some of the students come by sometimes, so I'm usually in my classroom by 8 and if I'm not, then I'm downstairs trying to run off papers for the day or whatever. And then I have classes straight from 8:30 until 2:30, with just a 30 minute break for lunch at 1:00, so it's a really hectic day. There's no time to really think because when one class ends the next one is already coming in so, that's difficult. So, I'm really busy all day long. It take work home too. It doesn't end just because the school bell rings and the day is over. And a lot of days I stay

here until 5:00 and even though I stayed late trying to catch up, I still take more work home. So, I'm just overpowered with work, and I just keep hoping that, it's my first year and that it will get better next year." The third intern described beginning teaching by saying, "(it's) a lot of hard work and (there's) not enough time to get it all done in."

Two of the three participants agreed that the first year of teaching was difficult, but all three stated that they felt that the year long internship had prepared them better than a semester of student teaching would have. They identified the "work load, paper work, discipline, and motivating students" as sources of difficulty. All three of the participants identified the school site internship as the most helpful component of their preparation program.

All three of the interns who were first-year teachers at the time of the interviews stressed that the practical experience had been far more valuable than their courses in general. Although each of the first-year teachers identified one professor at the university that had been the most influential in their teaching methodologies. They also identified the importance of a successful match between the intern and the cooperating teacher that the intern was assigned to.

The two first-year teachers that had pursued other careers before returning to the university as postbaccalaureate students desiring to become certified as secondary teachers agreed that they wished there had been enough time to take additional course

work in their area of specialty and subsequent certification to update their existing knowledgebase. One of them stated it this way, "...since I was a returning student and already had a bachelor's degree, and since I was returning to become a certified teacher, most of my time was (spent) taking education courses, and I really feel like I needed more science and less education courses."

The first-year teachers felt that their internship was a strength, especially their relationship with their co-operating teachers. All three of these first-year teachers have continued a very close working relationship with their co-operating teachers and feel confident in seeking their advice and support in any academic undertaking. Only one of the first-year teachers is teaching the same level of courses that was being taught during the internship. The other two first-year teachers are teaching in the same content areas, but with students who are performing at a different level than the students they worked with during their internship. One first-year teacher described it as follows, "This year I am teaching the regular level classes with a mixed ability group in the same content area that I taught during my internship. My students are not motivated and haven't set goals for themselves for any future education."

The former interns freely offered advice on ways to modify the preparation program. They strongly favored keeping the year long internship, but believed that interns should not be required to take course work at the university during the time they were

assigned to the school site to complete their internship. They felt that the necessity to leave the school site to attend late afternoon or evening classes at the university removed opportunities to participate fully with the students and other faculty members at the high school.

All three interns turned first-year teachers revealed in their interviews that they considered their internship year to have been their first year of teaching. The interviews were noticeably absent of any mention of problems in adjusting to the teaching role with students, other faculty and staff, or the administration. One intern said, "I really don't have time to have challenges with other teachers. I don't see any other teachers because of my schedule. I'm busy, busy, busy all day long."

One of them identified "Parents, an occasional run in (with them) when they don't understand why their child is being punished or whatever, because they hear the child's point of view and then (when) I call and I've been painted (as) an ogre, so it's been hard. I had really just one big major problem, but the rest of the time parents have really been on my side."

Based on the interviews and the descriptions about the value of the internship versus the coursework, the internship appears to have paved the way for a smoother transition into full-time teaching than the literature describes when referring to first year teaching experiences. As one intern put it, "I think the

internship (helped me the most), definitely. Just being in a school setting is a learning experience, definitely."

Importance of Study

This study suggests that a full-year teaching internship does indeed provide an experience which approximates the first year of teaching. It also suggests that beginning teachers who have completed an internship have professional self-confidence and therefore supports those authors who argue that the year long internship offers a more realistic induction into the profession of teaching than does a semester of student teaching.

Summary

After the publication of national reports on reform, such as those of the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986), which urged that the preparation of teachers occur in two phases, with the undergraduate years devoted mainly to a liberal arts education and a strong subject-matter preparation followed by the postbaccalaureate years devoted to profession education, many liberal arts colleges and universities were spurred to analyze their undergraduate certification programs and either make changes to existing programs or to design new programs for immediate implementation. This paper presents a qualitative case study of three interns that completed the fifth year postbaccalaureate program that was

implemented at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and were then hired as first-year teachers at this same high school.

The goal of this study was to learn more about Teacher-Preparation Programs: the Postbaccalaureate Fifth-year Internship in particular. This study compared the perceptions of three of the first cohort of interns to graduate from the postbaccalaureate fifth-year internship program. These three are presented as a qualitative case study because they not only completed their internship at this high school, but were also hired for their first-year of teaching in this same high school. According to the interns themselves the strength of the postbaccalaureate fifth-year internship program lies in two basic areas: First, the length of time spent in the classroom and at the school site, and second the quality and dedication of their co-operating teachers. Given the choice again they would choose the year long internship over the traditional semester length student teaching currently provided by many teacher preparation colleges and universities.

Implications for Further Research

According to Roth, 1986, the reform of a profession tends to occur in three major stages: 1) Recognition or consciousness-raising stage in which the problem is identified. 2) Response to identified problems with proposals for action. 3) Long-term, well-conceived proposals are implemented. This stage takes the longest amount of time, but has the greatest impact.

This qualitative case study demonstrates that the first two stages of the three major stages essential to the reform of a profession have taken place in Tennessee as well as in other areas of the United States. Since stage three takes the longest amount of time, but has the greatest impact on the reform of a profession, patience and perseverance of implementation of new programs for teacher certification are recommended at this time.

Based on the positive feelings of the three postbaccalaureate fifth-year interns nearing the end of the official first-year of teaching this researcher feels that a study similar to this was should be repeated with the following groups of cohorts in the internship program at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. As the numbers of interns turned first-year teachers increases the possibility of assimilating quantitative data from which a generalizable theory will arise will increase. Continued research will guard against the several threats to the teacher education profession as described by Roth (1986) and outlined earlier in this study.

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Appendix A
Teacher Interview Guide

Subject: _____ Subjects Taught: _____
School: _____ Age: _____
Highest degree earned: _____ Number and ages of children: _____

1. What is it like to be a beginning teacher?
2. Describe a typical day as a teacher of _____ high school.
3. In what ways do you think your coursework helped prepare you to be a teacher?
4. In what ways do you think your internship prepared you for teaching?
5. Which helped you the most? Coursework? Internship? Why?
6. How much time did you spend in classrooms prior to your internship?
7. What major problems have you encountered this year -- at the beginning of school and throughout the year?
8. How would you characterize any challenges with -- students? Other teachers? Principal? Office staff? Parents?
9. Did you have other teaching at this school?
10. During your internship did you work part-time? How many hours per week?
11. During your internship did you take courses or attend seminars? Did they enhance or detract from your internship?
12. During your internship did you participate in extra-curricular activities? If so, which ones?
13. If you were giving advice to a person who was about to become a teacher, what would you tell them?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your preparation program? 1st year of teaching?
15. Have you completed the Teacher Education 1988-89 Follow-up Survey? (if not, have the subject complete one)
16. What other work experiences have you had prior to your work as a teacher?
17. How would you describe your school?